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ABSTRACT

The number of single-parent families has increased dramatically. These families are subject to extreme economic problems and thus are in special need of career development and vocational preparation. Displaced homemakers are at a disadvantage inasmuch as they must reenter the work force; moreover, they face the additional career development hurdles of an external locus of control and low self-esteem. Adolescent mothers generally face the problems of diminished educational and vocational achievement and limited or no access to child care. Although single-parent fathers generally have a healthier economic status than their female counterparts, they often find their sole child-rearing role conflicting with their work expectations and must often fill social roles for which they have not been prepared. Effective career development programs for these special needs groups need a variety of components, including the following: emotional support, job-seeking skills, basic skills instruction, outreach and recruitment, child care, analysis of the role of gender in occupational choice, self-concept building, skills assessment, challenges of combining work and family roles, nontraditional job skills, and parenthood education. Examples of successful programs that have been tailored to single-parent audiences include high school dropout prevention programs for pregnant teens and teen parents, special programs catering to nontraditional adult students at established educational sites, support and referral networks linking a variety of community agencies and services, and newsletters geared toward single parents. (SK)

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF SINGLE PARENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES v

FOREWORD vii

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ix

INTRODUCTION 1

TYPES OF SINGLE PARENTS 3

- Displaced Homemakers 4
- Adolescent Mothers 7
- Single-Parent Fathers 8
- Women and Poverty 10

NATURE OF SINGLE PARENTHOOD 13

- Role Identity and Strain 13
- Lack of Education and Job Skills 14
- Lack of Child and Elder Care 14
- Summary 15

PREEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT NEEDS 17

- Types of Emotional Support 17
- Job-seeking Skills 18
- Basic Skills Instruction 18
- Outreach and Recruitment 19
- Child Care 19
- Sex Role Analysis 19
- Self-Concept Building and Skills Assessment 20
- Combining Work and Family Roles 21
- Nontraditional Job Skills 22
- Parenthood Education 22

CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS 25

- High School Dropout Prevention Programs 25
- Established Education Sites 25
- Network-based Enterprises 26
- Newsletters as Supplements to Other Programs 27

PUBLIC POLICY CONCERNS 29

FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDS 31

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

CONCLUSIONS 33

REFERENCES 35

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table

1. SINGLE STATISTICS 6

Figure

1. U.S. families with children in 1984 4

2. One- and two-parent families, 1970-1984 5

3. Family households with children, 1985 7

4. Family households with children, 1970-1984 9

5. Annual earnings by men and women 11

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FOREWORD

The Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE) is 1 of 16 clearinghouses in a nationwide information system that is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. This paper was developed to fulfill one of the functions of the clearinghouse—to interpret the literature in the ERIC database. It should be of interest to adult career, and vocational education practitioners working with single parents, as well as to researchers and policymakers who deal with the issues related to one-parent families.

The profession is indebted to Penny L. Burge, Associate Professor and Program Area Leader, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPISU), for her scholarship in the preparation of this paper. Dr. Burge has been a researcher and consultant on a number of projects and has written numerous publications in the areas of sex roles, nontraditional occupations, and parental attitudes and influence. Recipient of the Phi Delta Kappa Research Award and the VPISU College of Education Dean's Award for Research Excellence, she has been editor of the ***Journal of Vocational and Technical Education*** (JVTE) and serves on the editorial boards of JVTE, the ***Journal of Vocational Home Economics Education***, and ***Home Economics Research Journal***.

Recognition is also due to Marie Mayor, Chief of State Planning for Vocational Education, Maryland Department of Education; Jerelyn B. Schultz, Department Chair, Home Economics Education, Iowa State University; and to Louise B. Vetter, Senior Research Specialist, and Bettina A. Lankard, Program Associate, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, for their critical review of the manuscript prior to publication. Wesley Budke and Susan Imel coordinated the publication's development, with editorial assistance from Sandra Kerka. Clarine Cotton and Jean Messick typed the manuscript; Janet Ray served as word processor operator. Final editing was performed by Marsha Howden of the National Center.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The number of single-parent families has increased dramatically as the social and economic conditions of the nation have changed. These families are subject to extreme economic problems and thus have special needs for assistance with career development and vocational preparation. Although there are many types of single parents, discussion focuses mostly on low-income families consisting of a mother and her young children. This emphasis reflects the current status of the vast majority of single parents.

According to some estimates, 25 percent of all family groups with children are headed by one parent. Single-parent families are characterized by a high rate of poverty, a high percentage of minority representation, and relatively little formal education. Within this group are distinct types of one-parent families with particular problems and needs, such as the following:

- **Displaced Homemakers.** Increasing divorce rates displace large numbers of women from their former occupations and status as homemakers. At a disadvantage in entering or reentering the work force, these women face the additional career development hurdles of external locus of control and low self-esteem.

- **Adolescent Mothers.** Diminished educational and vocational achievement is the norm for teenage mothers. Their crucial need—to complete their educations and achieve self-sufficiency—is complicated by problems of access to child care.

- **Single-Parent Fathers.** Although they generally have a more healthy economic status than their female counterparts, single fathers often find their sole child-rearing role conflicting with work expectations, as well as with the need to fill social roles for which they were not prepared.

Some common aspects of the nature of single parenthood include role identity and strain, lack of job skills in occupations that provide enough income for an acceptable standard of living, and lack of high quality, affordable child care. Among the solutions to these problems are changes in public policy and public attitudes toward single-parent families and more adequate financial support and child care systems. Another key is career development; in addition to employment and economic security, career education can improve the physical and emotional well-being of participants. This reinforces the need to provide single parents with programs that prepare them for the world of work.

Effective career development programs need a variety of components targeted to the multifaceted needs of single parents. Program developers should consider the following aspects:

- Emotional support
- Job-seeking skills
- Basic skills instruction

- Outreach and recruitment
- Child care
- Analysis of the role of gender in occupational choice
- Self-concept building
- Skills assessment
- Challenges of combining work and family roles
- Nontraditional job skills
- Parenthood education

Examples of successful programs that have been tailored for specific single-parent audiences include (1) high school dropout prevention programs that give pregnant teens and teen parents the special support they need to stay in school; (2) established sites such as area vocational schools and community colleges that can provide special services for nontraditional, adult students; (3) support and referral networks linking a variety of community agencies and services; and (4) newsletters, an effective and inexpensive strategy for communicating with, educating, and supporting single parents.

In addition to developing effective programs, career educators can be advocates for public policy designed to assist single parents. Policy changes are needed in the areas of employment discrimination, recognition of nontraditional roles, government and employer support of child care, pay equity, social services for potential teen single parents, and work environment alternatives. In short, policies that establish an equitable educational climate for both sexes and all ethnic groups as well as recognition of single-parent families as a viable family form will benefit not only these families but society as a whole.

Information on career development for single parents may be found in the ERIC system using the following descriptors: *One Parent Family, *Career Development, Early Parenthood, Displaced Homemakers, Poverty, Role Conflict, *Nontraditional Occupations, Parenthood Education, *Job Training, Adult Education, Public Policy, Day Care, and Child Rearing. Asterisks indicate descriptors having particular relevance.

INTRODUCTION

The structure of the American family has been transformed as the social and economic conditions of the country have changed. What had long been regarded as the typical family has passed into history. Today, the family with a father as breadwinner and a mother as homemaker caring for two children makes up only a small percentage of family types. The new norm is the two-earner family in which both husband and wife, mother and father, work outside the home. At the same time, the number of single-parent families has also increased dramatically. The single parent, most commonly a mother, is the chief provider and caretaker. Within our current social and economic climate, it is the single-parent family that most often becomes the victim of extreme economic problems and hence has considerable career development needs.

Although one-parent families constitute a significant proportion of family forms (approximately 25 percent), most of the past research has focused narrowly on the effects of the absence of fathers on children, particularly male children. In recent years, however, a number of researchers have made strides in exploring other factors related to single parents, expanding our knowledge into the several different areas typically associated with research on families and on individuals (Hanson and Sporakowski 1986). Researchers interested in the single-parent household are starting to identify many factors that place these families at risk and to isolate aspects of career development that can be used to assist single parents effectively.

To establish a framework for analyzing effective career development and vocational preparation programs for single parents, this paper will first assess the size and nature of the target group and then identify components of programs that can successfully serve this group. The first part of this paper presents a profile of one-parent families. Such a profile shows the consistently disadvantaged position of most single-parent families relative to other family types (Norton and Glick 1986). They are characterized by a high rate of poverty, a high percentage of minority representation, and relatively little formal education. In short, as a group they generally have little equity or stature in American society and constitute a population with unusually pressing social and economic needs.

Not only is it clear from the literature that the needs of single parents are great, but also that their numbers are large and increasing more than any other family type today. Although all single parents have in common their divergence from the "norm" of the two-parent family, within the group of single parents there are distinct types of one-parent families who have problems unique to their group. Displaced homemakers are one single-parent type with special employment preparation needs. Adolescent mothers are another subgroup of single parents who find that their life choices are truncated from the time they become aware of their pregnancy (Brooks-Gunn and Furstenberg 1986). Single fathers are yet another subset of single parents who require help through educational programs on combining work and family roles.

After these types of single-parent families are identified, the next section of the paper examines components of successful programs that provide career development appropriate for single parents. Recommendations for future program development and policies are also provided.

For career educators, meeting the needs of the many types of one-parent families is a major social challenge. Because most single parents are women, a first step is an analysis of the role that the feminization of poverty plays in weakening the social order. Another part of this challenge is the recognition of the importance of career development and vocational preparation programs targeted for this audience.

Single parents require programs that offer a full range of services, from occupational exploration to job search assistance. To serve persons in differing economic conditions effectively, selected services may need more emphasis. In communities facing longer term economic decline, vigorous relocation efforts may be needed (U.S. Congress 1986).

Special assistance programs and policies are critical for those in need. For example, providing the right kinds of quality child care often is especially important. Formal and informal support systems are also critical. Assisting female single parents in identifying and preparing for occupations that are nontraditional for their sex is another recommendation emphasized in much of the literature reviewed.

Although this paper examines literature focusing on single parents in every category, most of the information will be devoted to a description and discussion of single-parent, mostly low-income families consisting of a mother and her young children. This focus results in some limitations, but it reflects the current status of most single parents, the vast majority of whom are women with low incomes who are most needy in terms of career development.

TYPES OF SINGLE PARENTS

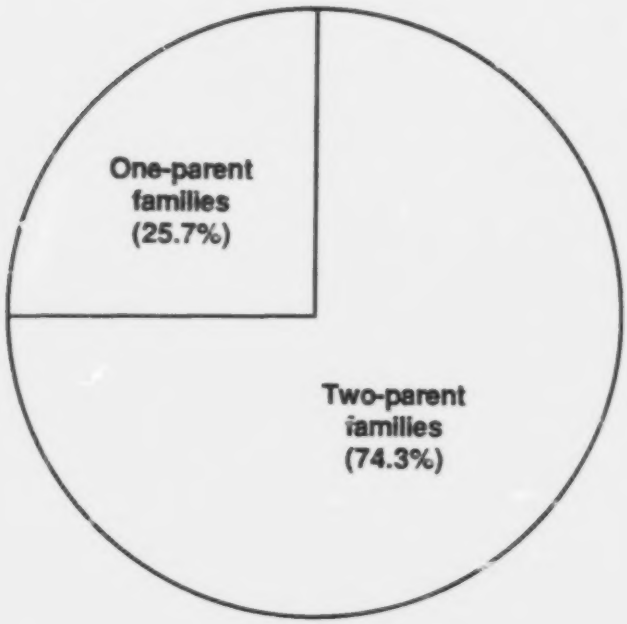
One of the major trends affecting American society in recent years has been the rapidly accelerating increase in single-parent families (Burden 1986). This family type has been termed in the literature as one-parent, the lone-parent, the solo-parent, and the single-parent household (Hanson and Sporakowski 1986). According to Rawlings et al. (1985), 25.7 percent of all family groups with children under 18 were headed by one parent in 1984, double the percentage of single-parent families in 1978 (see Figure 1). Figure 2 presents changes since 1970 in the percentages of single-parent and two-parent families with children.

An important way to document the sharp increase in one-parent families in the United States is to consider that 1 of every 4 families with children under 18 years old in 1984 was a one-parent family, up from 1 of every 10 in 1970. By comparison, the number of single-parent families increased by only 40 percent between 1960 and 1970—still a considerable growth (Norton and Glick 1986). Norton and Glick projected that nearly 60 percent of all children born in 1986 may be expected to spend 1 year or longer in a one-parent family before reaching the age of 18. Family experts have predicted that one out of every two families will be headed by a single parent by 1990 ("Playing Both Mother and Father" 1985). Table 1 documents changes in singles' statistics as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1985 ("How Single Parents Manage to Find a Little Private Time for Themselves" 1987).

Within most systems of accounting for family types, there is a large underestimate of the proportion of divorced, separated, and never-married parents living in related or unrelated subfamilies (Graham and Beller 1985). A related subfamily is a single parent with one or more single (never married) children under 18 years old living in the household and related to the person(s) who maintains the household. A single father and his child living with the father's parents are an example of a related subfamily. A single mother and her child who live with a friend are an example of an unrelated subfamily.

The incidence of single-parent families is much higher among blacks than whites (Hanson and Sporakowski 1986). In 1984 about 60 percent of all black families were headed by single mothers compared with 20 percent among white families. Hanson and Sporakowski (1986) reported that since 1970 the proportion of one-parent families has increased among all racial groups, but the proportional gap between the numbers of blacks and whites has widened considerably during the same time span. Figure 3 presents the percentages of black, white, and Hispanic single-parent families as reported by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 1985.

This large increase in the number of single-parent families has been spurred by high rates of separation and divorce and by more women having babies out of wedlock (Norton and Glick 1986). About 42 percent of single parents are divorced, 28 percent are separated, 17 percent have never married, and 13 percent are widowed (Allers 1982). Another factor related to the increase in numbers is the growing number of women in the work force. More women have the option of heading a family on their own. The growing acceptance of having a child out of wedlock, especially among teenagers, also plays a major role.



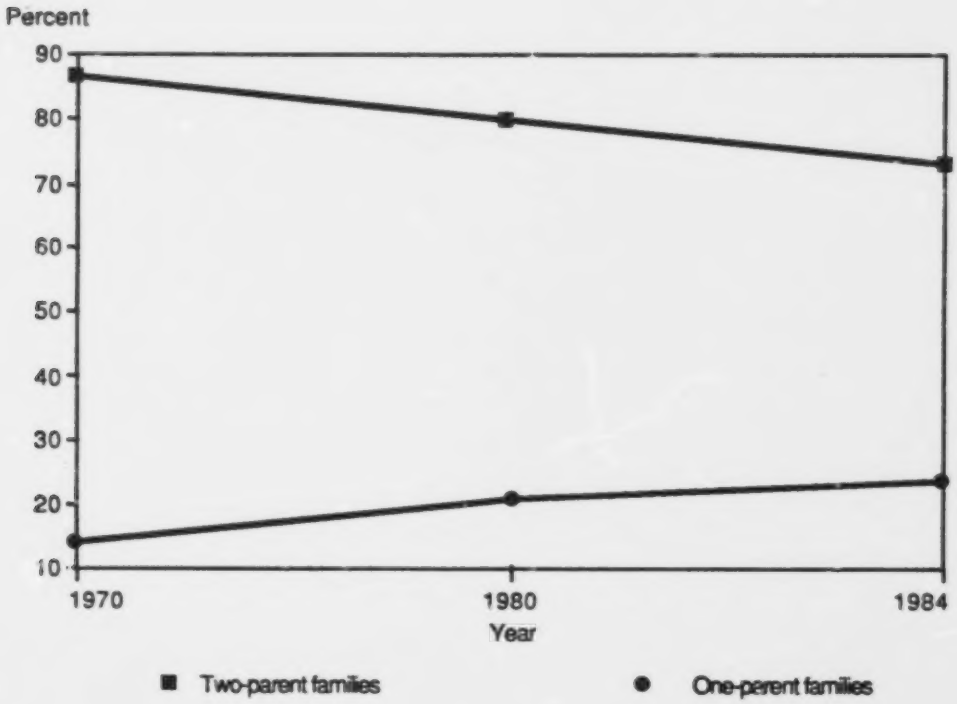
SOURCE: Rawlings et al. (1985), p. 45.

Figure 1. U.S. families with children in 1984

The number of single parents constitutes a significant proportion of our society and demonstrates the magnitude of the problem of providing assistance to single parents in need. Complications arise when one attempts to clarify the needs of single parents because there are several unique subgroups, each with particular characteristics and problems. Single parents are often divided into three major groups: displaced homemakers, teenage parents, and single fathers.

Displaced Homemakers

Although the divorce rate has leveled off in this decade from its rapid climb in the 1970s, nearly one in every two marriages is expected to break apart. Some projections indicate that this rate may have peaked and may even drop slightly in the 1990s (Norton and Moorman 1987). Even with a minor decrease, the large number of divorces is an important factor for career educators. Few families experience economic strain greater than do newly divorced families, especially those headed by women (Pett and Vaughan-Cole 1986). In a longitudinal study of separated and divorced households, Weiss (1984) found that marital dissolution drastically reduced the new single-parent family's available household income. This income reduction remained stable over a 5-year period. In comparison, the average income for married couples increased steadily during



SOURCE: Rawlings et al. (1985), p. 43.

Figure 2. One- and two-parent families, 1970-1984

this same period. Changes need to be made in the socialization process of women to prepare them with accurate information about the divorce rate. When emphasis is placed on career development for women, with the recognition that females cannot expect to be taken care of by a spouse or any other public or private source, women will have a better chance of becoming adequately prepared for their work lives (Pett and Vaughan-Cole 1986).

Many women who were previously occupied as homemakers and who were wives of employed husbands were assigned their husbands' social status by society. Upon losing their spouses through death or divorce, these women usually must seek employment in traditionally female-oriented job areas, such as clerical or retail sales. These are typically lower paying, lower status positions (ibid.). Thus, these women have been displaced not only from their previous occupations but also from their previous social status.

Displaced homemakers represent a group of women who have contributed to society through their families and who possess many skills, yet who are at a disadvantage when entering the work force (Bruyere, Stevens, and Pfost 1984). They must also cope simultaneously with raising their children and maintaining their children's self-concepts as well as augmenting their own. These women typically have spent years as homemakers and suddenly lose their financial support

TABLE 1

SINGLE STATISTICS

Number of Adults Who Live Alone:

1960	1 in 30
1985	1 in 10

Number of Divorced People:

1970	47 per 1,000
1985	128 per 1,000

Children under 18 Living with One Parent:

1960	6 percent
1970	9 percent
1985	12 percent

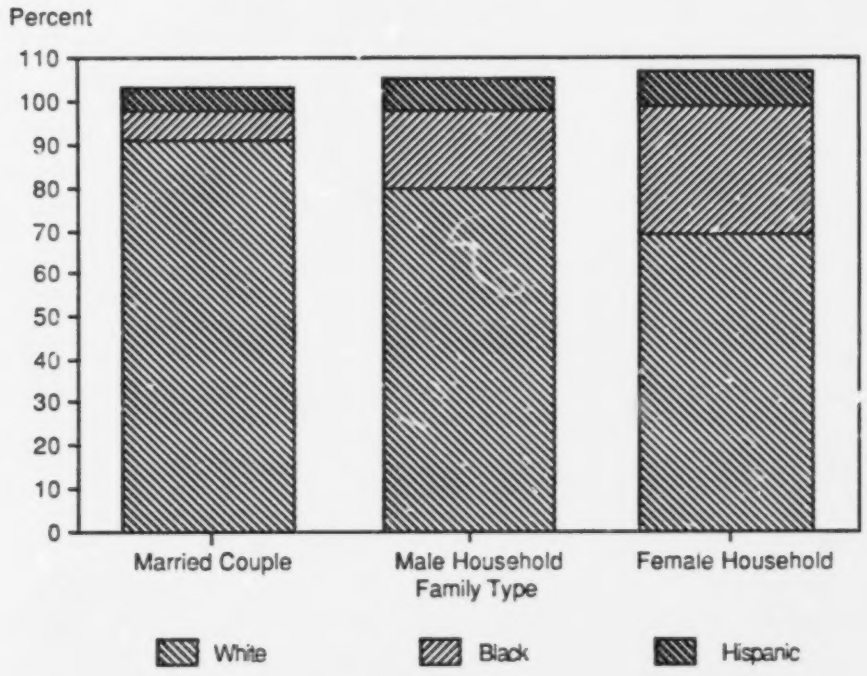
Ratio of Single Men to Single Women by Age:

15-24	112-100
25-34	119-100
35-44	84-100
45-65	54-100
Over 65	26-100

SOURCE: "How Single Parents Manage to Find a Little Private Time for Themselves" (1987), p. 5.

through death, divorce, separation, or disability of a spouse. Generally, they are older women who have little or no employment history, are too young for Social Security, and have obsolete training and skills (Wiberg and Mayor 1985). Downey and Moen (1984) suggested that this new level of status and income, whether earned or transferred publicly (e.g., welfare, food stamps) or privately (e.g., alimony, child support), is a strong predictor of a woman's belief that her actions are effective in bringing about desirable outcomes (her internal locus of control). Therefore, the lower the income of the displaced homemaker, the lower her perceived internal locus of control.

Along with primarily external locus of control, low self-esteem is one of the major career development hurdles for displaced, single parents. Keith and Schafer (1982) underscored the effects of this negative perception by noting the erosion of self-concept as single parents attempt to cope with the disapproval of important others in their lives. They often feel inadequate as competitors for jobs and lack the confidence to seek employment, yet, the most basic and immediate need of most displaced single parents is economic self-sufficiency. Kohen (1981) noted that until women are equipped to provide for their families, they will continue to experience extreme difficulty in making the transition from marriage to single parenthood.



SOURCE: Rawlings et al. (1985), p. 47.

Figure 3. Family households with children, 1985

Findings in the literature strongly support the need of displaced homemakers for individual counseling and career assistance (Shields and Sommers 1981). For example, Olson, Johnson, and Kunce (1985) found that displaced homemakers scored lower than high school students on a vocational identity and information inventory even though the displaced homemakers reported an average of 13 years of completed education.

Adolescent Mothers

Teenage mothers, a large subgroup of single parents, constitute a social problem that has reached epidemic proportions today (Foster and Miller 1980; Pecoraro, Robichaux, and Theriot 1987). The United States has a higher teenage birth rate than almost any other developed nation in the world, with nearly one-fifth of all births being to teenagers in 1986. In 1985, teenage births constituted 50 percent of all children born outside of marriage (Hodgkinson 1985). Each year in this country more than one million, that is, 1 in 10, teenage women become pregnant. The most striking statistics are that many births are to young mothers ages 13 and 14. Every day in America 40 teenage girls give birth to their third child (Hodgkinson 1985).

Examination of past and current living conditions in terms of housing, income, use of social services, and child health reveals a continued association between out-of-wedlock birth and relative deprivation. Diminished life resources exist for all single mothers, including those who were married at the time of the birth of their child, but became single later. The association between single mothers and a continuing state of deprivation is greater, however, and continues longer for those women who are young and single at the birth of their first child (Filinson 1985).

The adverse consequences of teenage childbearing are well documented in the literature. Burdens to society include increased welfare dependency and state-supported health care (Cunningham and Burge 1983). For instance, approximately 60 percent of unmarried mothers receive Aid for Families with Dependent Children (Moore and Caldwell 1976). There are also increased risks for the health and normal development of the child (Granger 1982). Estimates indicate at least one suicide attempt by about 10 percent of all pregnant teens (Pecoraro, Robichaux, and Theriot 1987).

In most cases, diminished educational and vocational achievement is the norm for the teenage mother (Campbell, Breitmayer, and Ramey 1986). Adolescent childbearers are less likely to complete high school, attend college, find stable employment, or be self-supporting than are later childbearers (Brooks-Gunn and Furstenberg 1986). A large number of adolescent mothers remain single and those who marry are more likely to separate and divorce than women who marry later and postpone childbearing. The ultimate economic status of teen mothers whose marriages break up is even worse than that of mothers who never marry (Furstenberg and Crawford 1980). Clearly, adolescent mothers constitute a subgroup of single or potentially single parents who especially need career development assistance.

During the 1970s and 1980s, a small number of programs directed toward meeting this need were introduced. Evaluation of such programs suggests that the program clients were helped to remain in school during pregnancy and to return to classes after delivery. Results are often, however, in terms of long-term continuation of education, delay of subsequent pregnancy, and achievement of economic independence (Campbell, Breitmayer, and Ramey 1986). The number served by special programs represents only a small proportion of those in need of services.

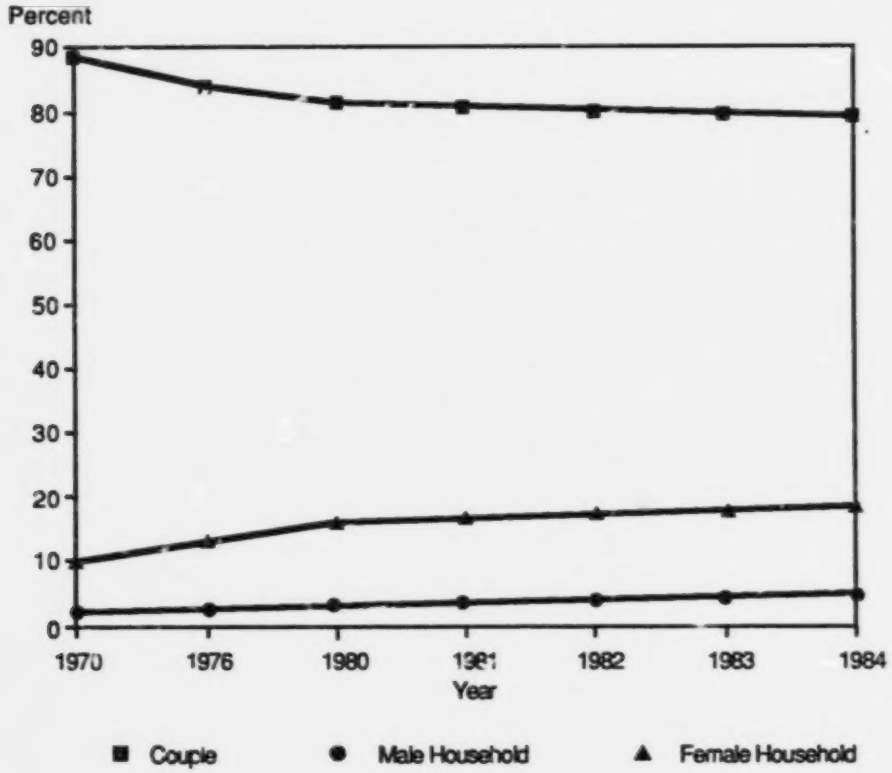
Problems with child care are believed to be largely responsible for the failure of many adolescent parents to complete their educations. The Guttmacher Institute's national study reported that the need for infant day care is teen parents' most significant problem (ibid.). Thus, a successful career development program for pregnant teens and teenage parents must include a quality support system with guaranteed child care. The content focus will be useful in the long run only if it fosters continuation of education for the parents as well as supplementary stimulation programs for the child. Campbell, Breitmayer, and Ramey (1986) found that teenage mothers who were assured free access to high-quality day care for their children had an increased likelihood of completing high school, obtaining postsecondary training, and becoming self-supporting.

Single-Parent Fathers

The number of single-father homes has increased over the past two and one-half decades. Between 1963 and 1976, the number of children of divorce living with their fathers increased 75 percent (Chang and Deinard 1982). Figure 4 shows that in 1984, the father was the single parent in about 3 percent of all family groups with children under 18, an increase from 1 percent in 1970 (Hanson and Sporakowski 1986). One significant factor leading to this increase is that most

fathers who become single parents do so by choice (Nieto 1982); they are, for example, making more claims for custody rights, though mothers still tend to be favored in court decisions. Most single-father households are a result of marriage dissolution rather than death or desertion (Gladding and Huber 1984).

A factor that may account for the willingness of fathers to become single parents is the healthy socioeconomic status of this group as compared to their female counterparts. This allows single-parent fathers a life-style that is capable of easily supporting children. Single fathers are known to have a much more favorable profile than their female counterparts (Norton and Glick 1986). There is a greater likelihood that single fathers will be in the work force than there is for single mothers. The most prominent differences between male- and female-headed households is that single fathers command higher incomes.



SOURCE: Rawlings et al. (1985), p. 45.

Figure 4. Family households with children, 1970-1984

Men, however, do not escape single-parenthood strains. Although pay inequities often favor men, workplace expectations for single-parent fathers may be more rigid than for their female counterparts. Voydanoff (1985) reported that many alternative work policies (e.g., flex time, work at home) may be considered appropriate for women but not for men, who are expected to demonstrate greater commitment to their work. Many single fathers feel limited in terms of the type of work they do, job mobility, work hours, promotions, and earnings (Chang and Deinard 1982; Gladding and Huber 1984). These expectations place a special strain on single-parent fathers because they are generally men who played an active role in child-rearing during their marriage (Gladding and Huber 1984). Hanson (1986) also found that female single parents had a larger social support system than their male counterparts. Without a strong, multifaceted network of relatives and friends, men (as do women) may experience considerable strain in combining work and child care expectations. They cannot easily maintain a job that requires them to travel, work overtime, or move frequently.

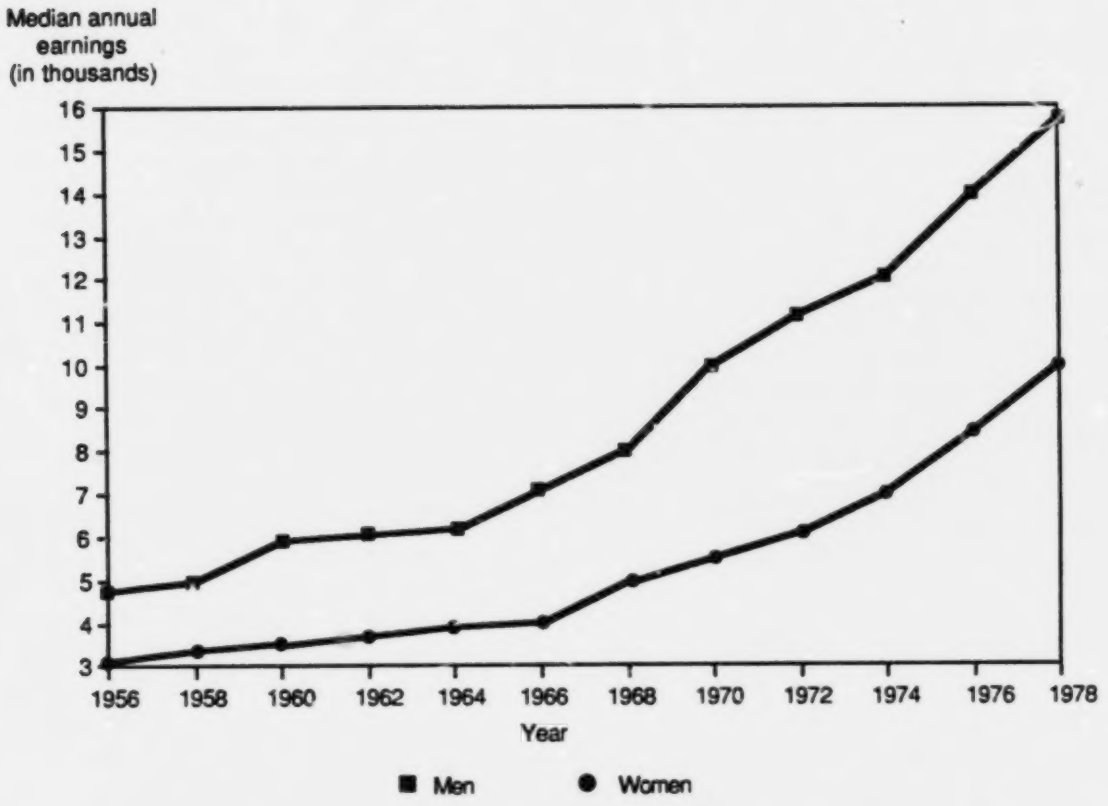
Single fathers must often fill social roles for which they are not prepared (Risman 1986). Fathers face added challenges because they often have not planned for nurturing roles. Although most single fathers were actively involved with their children before divorce, many of them do not know much about child development or child care practices (Gladding and Huber 1984). Despite this lack of preparation, Thompson (1983), in a review of research on the quality of fathers' parenting skills, concluded that the fathers in the sample were competent in their parenting behaviors. This can be attributed to the fact that a characteristic most single fathers share is a motivation to succeed (Chang and Deinard 1982; Gladding and Huber 1984).

For single fathers, career development in the workplace is likely to be well underway; however, the homemaker/parent role needs to be emphasized in programs designed for this group. Parenthood education is often the most critical need, followed by role-conflict counseling. Assistance in forming support networks can result from group efforts in career development.

Women and Poverty

Though more fathers are facing the parenting role alone, women are by far the majority of single parents, and it is widely accepted that female-headed single parent households are likely to be low-income households. Single parenthood is a major factor in what has been called "the feminization of poverty" ("Playing Both Mother and Father" 1985). This is primarily because marital separation produces a precipitous decline in women's household incomes. Another confounding factor is that marital separation is somewhat more likely to occur among lower income couples (Weiss 1984).

In all income groups, reduced income consequent to marital disruption appears to persist indefinitely or as long as the household remains headed by a single mother. In a longitudinal study of household income, Weiss (1984) found that generally the married poor move out of poverty; however, the single-parent poor remain there. A major part of the reason for this continuation of poverty can be traced to the inequities of the labor market, in which women often offer fewer working skills because they were trained in a narrower spectrum of careers and are paid less than men for the skills they do possess. Recent marketplace analyses indicate that women earn about 60 percent of every dollar men earn in most full-time, year-round, occupational categories (Hughes 1985; Seaward and Redmann 1987). This is a universal phenomenon that exists for all ethnic categories (Desy 1986). In fact, the disparities are so well defined that the median income of a fully employed woman with a college degree is roughly equivalent to that of a fully employed man with an eighth-grade education. Figure 5 presents the differences in pay for men and women from 1956 to 1978. From the late 1950s to the present the earnings gap between men and women has not improved (Couchman and Peck 1987).



SOURCE: Rawlings et al. (1985), p. 52.

Figure 5. Annual earnings by men and women

Most of the wage differentials between men and women arise either from the smaller amount of labor market preparation or experience attained by women or from discrimination against women. Lack of training or preparation for work arises from the sex role division of labor found in traditional two-parent families: men are wage earners and women care for the house and children. In the past, women were not prepared to provide financial support for themselves or their children because it was expected that a male would support them. Workplace discrimination arises indirectly and directly from the same image—the male as the breadwinner (Schorr and Moen 1979).

Because of such attitudes, the increase in households headed by single women is one of the most significant factors contributing to increased poverty not only for the women but for their children. This is largely due to lack of steady child support, low employment and earning rates,

and inadequate welfare benefits (Rodgers 1985). According to a U.S. commission study, 54 percent of single-parent families were living below the poverty line in 1983, compared to 18 percent for all families with children ("Playing Both Mother and Father" 1985). Many of these single parents are recipients of Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) who are eager to be self-supporting, but struggle with bureaucratic red tape that prevents them from participating in job training programs (Wiberg and Mayor 1985). For some, participation can mean losing benefits, including food stamps and health care, that are essential for survival.

Although it is true that a large and critical mass of female-headed, single-parent families is supported by government programs, it is also clear that not all low-income, one-parent families are welfare recipients. A study conducted by Pett and Vaughan-Cole (1986) found that 53 percent of income for women who received less than 10 thousand dollars per year came from personal earnings. Less than 25 percent of their income came from public transfer payments (e.g., AFDC). It is also important to recognize that single parents generally consider themselves to have great strengths such as helping networks with relatives, friends, and neighbors; family harmony and cohesiveness; and personal qualities such as independence, determination, and persistence (Miller 1987). Miller concluded the following in a study of female single parents and helping professionals:

> While the families were not without stress, they faced these conditions with creative coping behavior and energetic efforts. Moreover, the professionals perceived them to have much more stress than they themselves reported. (p. 1)

NATURE OF SINGLE PARENTHOOD

Although it is widely accepted that every family is a unique entity made up of distinctly different individuals, it is also true that families within certain family types have many similarities. In this section, commonalities that encompass single-parent families are described. Some common aspects of the nature of single parenthood include role identity and strain, lack of job skills in occupations that provide enough income for an acceptable standard of living, and lack of high quality, affordable child care.

Role Identity and Strain

One of the most pervasive characteristics shared by the subgroups of single parents is the need for development of a positive role identity and avoidance of intensive role strain. Despite the large numbers of single-parent families, Americans still hold a conventional view of the family as having two parents and two children. Schorr and Moen (1979) reported that this conventional version is so powerful that scholars, like lay persons, label single parents and their children as "deviant," "broken," "abnormal," or "unstable" families. Another way single-parent families are named or classified is on the basis of the reason for the singleness. Such categories as widowed, divorced, separated, unmarried, or teen parent direct attention to the causes and the feelings that may exist for the families (Schorr and Moen 1979). For example, the divorced may experience more social stigma than the widowed, though the unmarried face the most stigma. However, some researchers believe that the stigma for all these types is lessening because of the frequency of their occurrence.

For women, development of a positive identity as single parents is a hurdle often linked with poor ability to support their families financially. Single-parent mothers, for example, experience higher rates of poverty than those in any other marital category (Jones 1984). As a result, longitudinal evidence indicates that single motherhood is a cause of decline in psychological well-being. The chronic strain and life events, including reduced income, are the causes of changes in psychological status (McLanahan 1985). Women who have never worked are especially prone to depression at this time.

For men the role priorities of a single parent are also unclear and role strain results (Pichitino 1983). Men who take on child-rearing without a co-parent undergo a major shift in their life-styles as they attempt to balance wage earner and parental responsibilities. It is difficult to synchronize both of these roles, to be competent in both, and to have any time left over for personal or social development (Cladding and Huber 1984). As single parents of both sexes pursue work and parenting simultaneously, these combined demands frequently result in overload and interference. Hill (1986) concluded that the major structural difference between two-parent and single-parent families is that the latter lack the personnel to fill all the roles expected of a family in our social structure. Mothers, particularly single mothers, have lower take-home pay, work longer hours at combined job and home responsibilities, and experience greater work-family role strain (Burden 1986). Contributing to these conditions is the fact that the majority of women still

make occupational choices traditional for their sex (Kolde 1985). Pett and Vaughan-Cole (1986) described the situation for an older single-parent mother as one of fear—fear of rejection, of insecurity, of loss, of growth, of trying something new, of what friends and relatives might think should she become a welder rather than a clerk or a secretary.

Lack of Education and Job Skills

According to a United States Civil Rights Commission study (Levick 1986), if a woman's education has not prepared her for employment, she and her children may be destined to live in poverty. Single mothers often exhibit a lack of the education and occupational skills needed to advance beyond traditionally female-dominated, low-paying areas of employment often termed the "pink-collar ghetto" (Ehrhart and Sandler 1987). Norton and Glick (1986) reported that single parents are much more likely than their married counterparts to have less than a high school education. Examining additional demographic descriptions of this population underscores the paucity of education and job preparation (Hulse and Sours 1984). For example, only half of teens who become parents before age 18 graduate from high school (Levick 1986). In 1984, 400,000 girls aged 14 to 17 were not enrolled in school, and 1.3 million women aged 18 to 21 did not have high school diplomas.

The socialization process of women—occurring both in the home and in the schools—is a major cause of this situation (Desy 1986). Foremost is the socialization pattern that tends to limit single mothers' career-oriented vision of themselves (Hulse and Sours 1984). Most adult females have been taught traditionally feminine traits of dependence, nurturance, and helplessness, with emphases on physical attractiveness, finding a mate, and rearing children. This does not prepare them for a serious internal search for career commitment and preparation (Hulse and Sours 1984).

Lack of Child and Elder Care

Child care, and for some, care of elderly family members who are unable to care for themselves, are major barriers to attending career development and vocational programs. An overwhelming number of single parents, especially teenage parents, cannot afford child care and cannot find suitable caretakers for their children (Wiberg and Mayor 1985). In a study of users of day-care programs, Turner and Gallegos (1984) reported that factors important in choosing child care services include being close to home or work; high quality care by personable, trained staff; and clean facilities. While the cost of care is a problem for all parents, it is a significantly greater problem for single parents. In 1985 the average family paid about $3,000 for child care each year (Levick 1986). This amount is about one-third of the take-home pay for the average single female head of household.

Single parents, as do many other two-earner families, need a system with child care programs at workplaces as well as day care homes that are monitored for quality. Also critical are before-school and after-school programs that offer stimulating, appropriate activities. Many single parents need assistance in finding and paying for child care until they are able to earn enough to manage for themselves.

Summary

Based on the size and nature of the single parent population, it is evident that there is a need for change in both public policy and public attitudes to facilitate career development and enhance job preparation programs. In addition, it is necessary to provide more adequate financial support and child care systems for the financially insecure and depressed single parent (Pett and Vaughan-Cole 1986). The importance of career education to single parents becomes evident when the link between poverty and unemployment or underemployment is considered. Along with economic security, career development can have an additional result—improving self-esteem and other mental health factors. Numerous studies indicate that employment increases the physical, emotional, and financial well-being of women (Burden 1986). Women who are in the work force, as compared to full-time homemakers, show more self-acceptance, greater happiness, freedom from emotional problems, fewer illnesses, greater longevity, increased marital satisfaction, and have adolescent daughters with higher achievement patterns (Belle 1982; Burden 1986; Guttentag, Salasin, and Belle 1980). Having a job enables women to leave and to stay away from abusive situations (Burden 1986; Strube and Barbour 1984). Hence, the relationship between career achievement and quality of life is supported by examination of many factors. Also, the more education a woman has, the more likely she is to seek paid employment (Seaward and Redmann 1987). This reinforces the need to provide single parents with programs that prepare them for the world of work.

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PREEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

Changes in family makeup have created the need for programs and services to help single parents deal with these changes and integrate more closely aspects of life planning (Miller 1985). Effective programs should include a variety of components targeted to the needs of single parents. Although marketable skills leading to a good job and economic independence may be of primary concern, these skills cannot be gained without good support services (Wiberg and Mayor 1985). That is, before many single parents can give serious consideration to employment training, there are numerous problems they must address. Some of these problems include emotional support, workplace opportunity awareness, self-analysis, sex role analysis, exploration of nontraditional careers, child and elder care, transportation, basic skill instruction including literacy instruction when needed, and parenthood and homemaking courses with emphasis on combining work and family roles.

Our major educational institutions—particularly our secondary and postsecondary schools—were originally founded by men for the education of men. Women often have felt alienated in academic settings and have experienced "formal" schooling as either peripheral or irrelevant to their interests and development (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule 1986). Education and clinical services, as traditionally defined and practiced, often have not served the needs of women. For many women, the "real" and valued lessons learned did not necessarily grow out of academic work but from relationships with friends and teachers, life crises, and community involvement (ibid.).

Women interviewed by Belenky et al. (1986), in discussing their adult education programs, described their return to school as a chance to be listened to in their own terms. "Everyone wants what's best for me," one said. Many women spoke in terms of a caring staff who made the difference in helping them acquire job skills.

Types of Emotional Support

Emotional support needed by single parents within career development programs consists of three major components: formal, structured informal, and informal (Gladow and Ray 1986). Formal support consists of the services of helping professionals such as counselors or agency workers. Structured informal support is a by-product of involvement in group activities such as church organizations, Parent-Teacher Associations, and Parents without Partners. Informal support is provided by relatives, neighbors, friends, and romantic relationships. To provide informal emotional support, many single-parent career education programs use peer groups to deal with self-assessment, confidence building, solving economic problems, time and stress management, and the problems of family relationships (Wiberg and Mayor 1985).

Agency support is also necessary, of course, but it is useful only if single parents are able to take advantage of the services offered. Agency staff must be aware that impersonality and ego-deflating aspects of agency support negate their value in overall impact for single parents (Pett 1982).

> Social workers, family therapists, mental health counselors, and other family professionals who can assure single parents that it is both human and helpful to need and rely on sources of support outside the nuclear family may be making a real contribution to the lives of these families. (Gladow and Ray 1986, p. 121)

Even more important than providing support themselves, the best agencies help single parents develop their own support systems. This provides a more effective, long-range solution. A good approach would be for agencies, such as cooperative extension, to offer programs designed to address the identification of community agencies and other resources. A panel of single parents who have lived in the area for some time can describe their support strategies for further clarification. While providing useful information, informal support networks could be encouraged among the participants.

Job-seeking skills

There are many logistical and emotional obstacles that keep single parents from securing employment (Jones 1984). For many single parents, the experience of finding a job is a new and threatening ordeal. They often lack knowledge of basic job hunting procedures as well as the skills to compete in the job market. Career development programs can build self-esteem through instruction that prepares the clients to secure employment as well as teaching specific job skills. Hulse and Sours (1984) listed the following topics that programs should include: stress management, job-interviewing skills, personal finance, proper dress, self-concept building experiences, career planning, and resume writing.

Some specific problems with which single parents may have to deal in job seeking require special preparation. First, single parents may have to convince employers that child care arrangements will not interfere with their work. Prince (1984) suggested that career counselors help their clients demonstrate that they are in control of and have confidence in their child care plans.

Jones (1984) cautioned that many older women may need to be prepared to experience age discrimination when they seek employment. She described problems of convincing employers that older employees are not harder to train. On the contrary, mature workers are more trainable because conceptual thinking and IQ improve with age. Furthermore, research indicates lower turnover and absenteeism rates for older workers. Armed with such information, older workers can successfully respond to age bias and pursue employment with confidence.

Basic Skills Instruction

Basic skills needs for single parents can be divided into two categories—academic and hands-on experiences. Remedial courses in basic academic skills could give single parents a chance to catch up in areas that they have not developed. Literacy instruction is sometimes essential before other areas can be considered. Again, such instruction needs to be nonthreatening and geared to the educational needs of the specific single-parent audience.

The area of hands-on remediation often applies to learners in skill areas nontraditional for their sex. Hagerty (1985) reported high dropout rates in training programs for women who had not had skill-oriented coursework in school or in prior work experience. A solution was to offer additional instruction in tools of the trades, basic electronics, and basic electricity, which served to bridge the knowledge gap.

Outreach and Recruitment

The extremely disadvantaged are most often the target group for career development programs. These are the people just below or just above the poverty line who often slip through life with little attention to career development. Program guidelines and objectives should focus on the needs of the largest population to be served, and adequate recruitment plans need to be initiated. These plans will be effective if single parents recognize in the initial contact the benefits they can receive through program participation.

For the disadvantaged to benefit from career education, recruitment information techniques must reach them in familiar forms. Public announcements should be laid out to attract attention, give the important information, and use an appropriate reading level. Radio and television spots are often useful. Concerned educators can display information in such places as supermarkets, laundromats, hair styling salons, clinics, churches, and schools (Pett and Vaughan-Cole 1986). Meeting sites for such programs may also be located in nontraditional classroom settings. Dunn (1987) reported that the best recruiters for special programs are disadvantaged students who are currently enrolled or recently graduated. He also suggested recruiting through other agencies that serve similar target populations.

Child Care

Employed single parents are a tremendous source of work force potential and stability that could be lucratively tapped by business and industry. This source could be maximized by the provision of adequate day care arrangements for young children. This is critical not only during employment but during the period of preparation for employment.

Career education programs that take these needs into account have a better chance of making attendance at programs away from home more successful. In the best cases good care is provided at the education site. If facilities are not available and cannot be developed, assistance in locating child care arrangements at another location should be made available. Sometimes, financial assistance is also necessary. For some parents, reimbursement for care services is all that is needed because they already have made choices and arrangements on their own.

Sex Role Analysis

A major influence in career choice is occupational sex stereotyping, or normative ideas about the appropriateness of occupations for men and women (Miller 1985). Within the vocational curriculum women tend to enroll in business courses, which train them for traditionally female jobs, and to avoid trade skills programs, which could prepare them for work with suitable pay to support a family (Desy 1986). When training in areas nontraditional for women is made available and attractive, women will be better prepared to enter occupations that provide adequate earning power. Career counseling and guidance free of sex bias and stereotyping will be effective when they include vocational assessment, evaluation, individualized education and employment plans, and placement assistance (Kolde 1985). Women need to be made aware of all occupational choices that match their interests, abilities, and talents, particularly those that will enable them to support themselves and their children.

Sex-equitable vocational programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels can be designed to provide ways for helping single parents become aware of their interests and talents, examine

work force opportunities, and find and use the means needed to match their abilities with these opportunities. Federal legislation, including Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the 1976 Vocational Education Amendments, and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, has directed vocational educators to offer and emphasize nontraditional programs. In the traditionally male vocational programs of agricultural, technical, and trade and industrial education both the number and percentages of female students have increased (Vetter and Hickey 1985).

Vetter and Hickey (1985) suggested the following strategies to broaden the range of nontraditional occupational opportunities for single-parent mothers:

- Upgrade efforts to inform students about nontraditional options.
- Use statements and photographs in course catalogs, posters, and other recruitment materials to show that women are welcome in all vocational education programs.
- Bring nontraditional students and workers to the attention of all students through panel presentations and career day conferences.
- Provide information to parents about the range of opportunities for women and girls in vocational education through media publicity and parent-school organizations.
- Work with employers to assist them in obtaining highly skilled workers, regardless of gender. (p. 29)

Self-Concept Building and Skills Assessment

Females who have never worked outside the home for pay or who have had lower paying and lower status jobs frequently find it difficult to develop positive self-concepts. Bould (1977) pointed out that when income sources are uncertain women are likely to have a weaker sense of control over their lives. Low pay for females stems from the fact that both men and women and high school boys and girls devalue work done by women (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974). Because females are socialized to be passive and dependent, they often have low motivation to achieve. Women tend to have more negatively valued personality traits such as dependence, external locus of control, and fear of failure, and many studies have found that women have more negative self-images than men (Doyle 1985).

Franz and White (1985) suggested that females frequently need more individuation processes than males to develop more positive attitudes of self-worth. Ambert (1983) suggested that if financially insecure single mothers could be helped to obtain the rewards of a higher paying job, the result would likely be an increase in parental self-confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of independence. For most women, higher paying occupations are likely to be those nontraditional for their sex. Paradoxically, persons who suffer from poor self-esteem are less likely to strive for the unknown, represented by nontraditional vocational preparation and employment. These individuals are more likely to select low-risk, low-paying occupations such as those traditional for their sex.

Vocational counselors and classroom teachers encourage the psychological development of single parents through a variety of activities. Reinforcement and support of students' consideration of courageous stands, including the choice of careers dominated by the opposite sex, are one way to facilitate stronger self-concept growth and greater internal locus of control. Another way career development programs can help single parents develop positive self-concepts

is by spending time on self-analysis. When students recognize their personal strengths and weaknesses, they will be better able to match them with suitable traits needed in occupational areas. A key to this is identifying abilities the single parent already has and translating them into marketable skills (Wiberg and Mayor 1985).

The use of role models is also helpful in developing a surer sense of self. When people are surrounded by persons who have reached a high level of self-actualization, they will be able to pattern their own behaviors after their observations. Helping students develop competence in occupationally related skills will also help to raise their level of self-esteem. Successful experiences in career-day activities would be one way to help competence grow. For example, hands-on activities in a variety of occupational areas can be helpful and will hold attention. These activities would enable each person to receive some individual attention with a role model. In short, anything that can be done to improve self-concept among those with low self-esteem will tend to reduce inequalities in educational achievement and in labor market rewards (Desy 1986).

Combining Work and Family Roles

The expectations and demands of work and family roles place constraints on one another, especially for single parents. Traditional career development programs have not placed much emphasis on these work-family constraints (Miller 1985). Too often, career education is viewed as an individual activity, and the complexities of the work-family interaction are not incorporated. Career development services for single parents will be effective when they incorporate direct attention to the type of family unit. Single parents need to engage in career planning and planning for child care and homemaking roles simultaneously.

Career educators who prepare students for occupations in today's workplace should include the exploration of work-family interaction in both instruction and counseling (Burge and Hillison 1987). This is necessary because work and home life roles for men and women are changing and expanding. While single-parent mothers are shifting from homemaker to wage earner and homemaker, fathers are moving from primary wage earner to worker and homemaker. As discussed earlier, this combining of work and family challenges most single parents by creating role conflicts.

One way to meet this challenge is to examine the effect of sex-related occupations and homemaking stereotypes on life choices. An activity that can help people understand how jobs and workers can be stereotyped is to conduct interviews with both men and women employed in a variety of jobs. Such interviews already are wisely used for a variety of career development purposes, so work and family interaction questions could easily be added to the existing interview schedule.

Class members could share their expectations, and discussion would result. Analysis of differences and similarities of males and females should be explored. When these activities are completed, the learners may have other suggestions for information or activities the leader could provide. Guest speakers such as the state-level sex equity coordinator for vocational education or the local personnel director from an industry that has special programs related to integrating work and family life may assist.

Nontraditional Job Skills

Occupational segregation by sex continues to remain the most important stumbling block facing women in the work force (Kolde 1985). Although the number of women preparing for and entering occupational fields dominated by men has increased in the last 10 years, women are still concentrated in a relatively small number of occupations. For example, women hold fewer than one of every five jobs in the skilled trades. In addition, occupations such as lawyers, physicians, dentists, engineers, accountants, and law enforcement officers are considered nontraditional for females.

Job requirements, with rare exceptions, are not related to sex. Women are competent to perform all roles in the workplace. They must move into a wider range of jobs than they have traditionally held if they wish to make more money and to have opportunities for advancement (Kolde 1985).

Moving women into nontraditional occupations depends on the willingness of educators to be innovative in their career education approaches and to persevere despite tenacious beliefs about stereotypical workplace roles for women. Unless single mothers give serious consideration to new information, it is unlikely that either attitudes or values about sex-stereotyped occupations will change. Eccles (1986) described approaches that provide a mechanism to increase women's perceived career options:

> Women's (and men's) perceived career options can be increased by programs targeted to their beliefs that train them to (1) associate different attributions and expectations with various occupations, (2) assess the value they attach to occupations, (3) reevaluate their stereotypes of various occupations and life-roles, and (4) reassess the compatibility between various career options and one's adult-role plans. Actively socializing young women and men to recognize the need to be able to support oneself and one's family is probably as important as helping them select the most "appropriate" profession. (p. 19)

While she explained that comprehensive career and life-role counseling programs will be most effective if they include all of these components, Eccles emphasized the importance of socializing women and men to recognize the need to support themselves and their families. For women, the means of support may be through occupations nontraditional to their sex. Therefore, a place to begin is to recognize that the catalyst that brings women into nontraditional occupations is often dire economic need (Hagerty 1985). Information about the pay differential between "men's and women's worth" is critical early in career exploration. A next step to assist women in preparing for nontraditional employment is to help them overcome a number of barriers identified by career education research. The most serious barriers include peer and parental pressure (Hagerty 1985).

Parenthood Education

The findings of Pett and Vaughan-Cole (1986) strongly reinforce the need for government-mandated family life education programs, K-12, to prepare young people for marriage, parenthood, and perhaps, unfortunately but realistically, single parenthood. For adults who are already single parents, educational programs on child rearing and child growth and development can promote a variety of internal (e.g., knowledge, self-confidence) and external (e.g., child care, recreation) resources that support positive child rearing (Loveland-Cherry 1986).

A nontraditional role for men is that of the caregiving, nurturing parent. Programs that help males meet these role demands must be equally as innovative and tenacious as those that lead women to occupations nontraditional for their sex. Self-help groups made up of a cohort of fathers and a counselor-educator may provide one of the best forums for child care and homemaking instruction (Gladding and Huber 1984). Home economics programs at the high school and junior or middle school levels can prepare the way by stressing parenthood skills for both males and females. These classes, focusing on attitudes and knowledge, assist in changing young people's perceptions about the appropriateness of the parenthood role for both sexes.

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Components of career development programs for single parents can be combined in many ways to tailor programs for specific audiences. In this section, selected types of career development delivery systems are described.

High School Dropout Prevention Programs

Eighty percent of teenage mothers drop out of high school (Ferguson and Reed 1987); hence, pregnant teens and teen parents are special targets for dropout prevention programs. Azcoitia and Viso (1987) found that students enrolled in career-vocational programs are less likely to drop out of school than those who do not enroll in these programs. Especially effective and useful are programs that include basic academic skills as well as occupational preparation. Teenage parents, as well as all other young people, also need accurate information and guidance related to sexuality and family planning (Pecoraro, Robichaux, and Theriot 1987). Teenage parents also need assistance setting goals related to balancing the dual roles of parent and employee.

Hodgkinson (1985) stated that vocational education and work-study strategies, as well as the "alternative high school" pattern, seem to be effective in helping teen parents become self-sufficient wage earners. These alternative high schools offer comprehensive programs at sites arranged for teen parents only. Quality programs include academics, prenatal and parenting classes, courses in nutrition and human sexuality, and job training. These programs are often labeled "alternative" because students are allowed to work at their own pace, using materials that are best suited to their particular needs. In most cases, a nursery on the school campus is available for child care if needed, so that mothers can remain in school after their babies arrive. These model programs prevent isolation, assist school dropouts in keeping up morale, and provide academic and job skill instruction (Pecoraro et al. 1987).

Whether or not pregnant teens and teen parents are in special programs with peers or are mainstreamed into regular classrooms, teenaged parents need special support to stay in school. Wiberg and Mayor (1985) described an effective support network of teachers and peers who provide understanding as the teen parents handle their many problems. This support is built on the realization that these special students have problems (such as low esteem, time and stress management difficulties, or few long-term or short-term goals) that must be faced before the educational and career training process can continue effectively. Though such networks are necessarily different for students in regular classes and in special classes, the emphasis on support mechanisms should be central to each.

Established Education Sites

Area vocational centers may offer ideal sites for career education and vocational preparation for single parents. Because of their structure, such centers have recently become the focus of the 1986 report card developed by the Project on Equal Education Rights (PEER). These centers have

been identified as vocational education sites that would be particularly attractive to "nontraditional students" who are not attending high school. Because vocational centers have a potential for diversity in student population and in scheduling occupational education courses, they are particularly important as educational institutions for single parents, especially reentry women, displaced homemakers, and low-income women. Establishing child care centers in area vocational centers will overcome one of the major barriers for single parents who wish to return to school (Comeau, Stater, and Graves-Johnson 1987). Such sites can also provide a laboratory for preparing workers for other child care agencies.

Community colleges provide another source for sites that can offer many opportunities for career education and vocational training for single parents. As a part of their services to their regions, they often provide basic literacy instruction, which is sometimes necessary to enable single parents to take advantage of further educational opportunities. Occupational programs in a variety of vocational service areas are a part of every curriculum. Courses that explore the concept of sex role stereotyping and vocational equity issues are also usually available on most campuses. Other services—including personal counseling, career counseling, training for preemployment preparation, and job placement—are integral parts of most community college offerings.

Another added benefit is that many single parents feel comfortable in the adult education atmosphere that these settings provide. For many, "going to college" denotes prestige and a positive statement about themselves. Most states have sites located throughout their different geographic areas. In most localities a person should be able to attend a community college within 50 miles of home. Many such colleges have various campus sites or are able to provide transportation from localities to the campus. In some cases where single parents need a means of getting to school, reimbursement for expenses, car pooling, or a school bus system can be arranged.

Network-based Enterprises

Single parents, especially low-income women, often have spent extensive time and effort to identify the services available to them in order to be able to participate in job preparation programs (Guglielmino 1987). In many cases, the obstacles they encounter from agency to agency become so discouraging that they stop trying.

A number of successful career education programs help single parents overcome these problems by providing support and referral services through the development of linkages among community agencies. These organizations include those that offer legal advice, health care, emergency funds, shelter and protection, substance abuse counseling, and housing.

Information about each type of organization should include facts about resources offered and their availability. In addition, many single parents benefit greatly from practical experience in using the resources. Visits to agencies such as the health department, extension office, police department, hospital, and library encourage single parents to overcome their fears and take advantage of the many services available to them (Langone 1986).

Newsletters as Supplements to Other Programs

Newsletters are an effective and inexpensive strategy for communicating with, educating, and supporting single parents (Nelson 1986). This delivery method is a way to offer information to a large number of people while cutting costs for career education programs. Because many single parents must work outside the home in addition to carrying a full schedule of homemaking and child care, frequent, traditional parent group meetings may not be feasible. Though such meetings offer networking and discussion, scheduling problems for some can diminish their effectiveness. Newsletters can be used to supplement group or individual career development instruction. To be effective, newsletters must be read, so the reading level of the text needs to correspond to the reading and educational levels of the clientele being served.

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PUBLIC POLICY CONCERNS

Career educators and counselors can be effective advocates for public policy designed to assist single parents. They should also voice their concerns to employers and government officials through appropriate channels (Gladding and Huber 1984). United States public policy has not yet adjusted to the increased number of single-parent households (Rodgers 1985). Current policies and the structure of work are oriented toward the disappearing "traditional" family with the husband as provider and the wife as caretaker. The result has often been discrimination against women employees by providing incentives to maintain traditional roles (Burden 1986). This protection of traditional roles is often in direct conflict with the protection of individual rights and the provision of equal opportunity to all. One equitable response to the growing number of single parents would be the adoption of a broad social policy that supports the emerging needs of families. For example, Turner and Gallegos (1984) called for government support of child care as well as other innovative ways to provide high quality care for our nation's children. They described child care as a social and economic problem directly related to employment. Providing high quality care for family members would allow single parents to obtain and retain jobs as well as to progress up the career ladder.

Burden (1986) suggested other policies such as affirmative action and equal opportunity programs, on-the-job training for women, increased mobility and advancement for women, comparable worth legislation (also discussed by Hughes 1985), and incentives for employer-based policies and programs. Miller (1987) suggested pay equity legislation that would ensure that women and men in all occupations are paid equitably. Comparable worth policies are also necessary to ensure that female-intensive occupations are no longer dead-end, low-paying positions.

There are strong pressures today in this country to eliminate or change social services programs that benefit potential single teen parents. This is especially problematic as demographic research indicates that, although American teens are sexually active no more frequently than teens in other countries, our teen pregnancy rate is one of the highest among developed nations. Hodgkinson (1985) attributed this difference to the inability of American youth to get access to information about both birth control and abortions. When American governmental bodies consider policies that require parental consent for teenage girls to obtain contraceptives or abortions, they make it difficult for sexually active teens to prevent or terminate a pregnancy (Campbell, Breitmayer, and Ramey 1986). At the same time, there are few government-supported programs that provide good day care, making child care needs a major impediment to teen single parents trying to receive an education. This early barrier prevents them from getting a better paying job later on. Adolescent pregnancy and poverty form a vicious cycle with negative consequences to the teen and society, providing a great incentive for these changes in government policies (Pecoraro, Robichaux, and Theriot 1987).

Desy (1986) stated that one goal of educational policy should be to eliminate gender stereotypes. Provisions of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 (U.S. Congress 1984) ensure access to vocational education services for persons who have been inadequately

served. Single parents are named in this act as one of the major target groups to be provided opportunities to gain marketable skills so that they can support themselves and their families. This creates greater access for women to a wide range of occupations, especially those related to high technology (Seaward and Redmann 1987). Grants are available to community-based organizations as well as public educational institutions offering vocational education. Funds may be spent for educational materials, literacy instruction, child care, and transportation. These funds have resulted in the establishment of successful programs serving some single parents. However, those that have been served are few in number compared to the size of the population requiring such services.

Along with policies established by the government, local businesspeople and other employers can establish policies to help solve some of the complex problems single parents face in combining their work and family lives. Burden (1986) examined the role of work in the lives of single parents and concluded that they exhibited high levels of job satisfaction and did not have higher rates of job absenteeism than other workers. She recommended improvements in the work environment to aid single parents. There are a number of alternatives that would benefit employers while allowing their workers to be successful employees and parents. They include flex time; 4-day work week options; work-at-home plans; job sharing; part-time professional positions; paid maternity, paternity, and sick-child leaves; and on-site child care (Burden 1986). Schedules that would allow parents several mornings or afternoons free each week are also helpful (Voydanoff 1985).

Employers need to consider a wide range of child care support options for their employees, including information and referral, education on selecting high quality care, vendor payments, voucher payments, and centers on or near the work site (Turner and Gallegos 1984). These services should be offered to parents of both sexes; they are equally important to single-parent fathers and mothers. Other services needed are staff training on work and family issues and vigorous affirmative action programs to address the inequitable position of women in the work force (Burden 1986). All of these policies are critical for improving the welfare of single parents; they are also in the best interest of business and industry to minimize the amount of job-family role strain for all employees (Burden 1986). Kahn (1981) reported that a work-family interactive approach is likely to improve the physical and mental health of employees, to increase satisfaction with work, and to decrease absenteeism and turnover rates.

Educational policies that seek to establish an equitable educational climate for both sexes and every ethnic group are necessary for all students, especially single parents. Only when career education is free of sex bias and stereotyping can both women and men learn skills to support themselves and their families, to raise children, and to obtain positions in fields in which they are truly interested. In the long run, equal access to high quality schooling for both blacks and whites should substantially reduce the difference in single-parenthood rates for blacks and whites (Sander 1985).

FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDS

Few studies specifically examine the role of employment in the lives of single parents or the impact of job performance or satisfaction on family life (Burden 1986). The lack of research in this area is significant because such studies are necessary to determine the content and desired outcomes for career development programs for single parents. Career development specialists and family studies experts need to work together to coordinate future efforts.

Aside from developing new insights into the problem, Bruyere, Stevens, and Pfost (1984) suggested that employment counselors might conduct a component analysis of existing career development programs to determine which combination of services yields the most important changes. Needs assessment for specific regions is suggested by Pecoraro, Robichaux, and Theriot (1987). Following studies of these types, programmatic refinements and revisions can be made to augment the success of future efforts.

Program measurement of the long-term results for single parents and their children requires longitudinal studies, short-term experimental designs, and ethnographic approaches. In addition, research designs must include exploration of the effects of age, life stage, and other situations on the career education needs of single parents. Such research can be problematic because of the reciprocal relationships among educational achievement, job status, and salary. Internal validity problems, such as maturation and history, must also be taken into account. Newer methodologies such as path analysis, and newer tools such as LISREL (Linear Structural Relationships, a computerized statistical analysis program) can be useful when employed to investigate the causal interrelationships among these variables.

Along with a need to expand research methodologies, a current problem in the research is the artificial sample restrictions used in many studies. For example, most research has focused on the prototypical single parent (black, urban, poor, female, never married); much more information is needed on other groups of single parents, especially those who are less disadvantaged. The relative importance of home and work factors is an area of research that needs further study. Hanson and Sporakowski (1986) stated that more information is needed about the factors that help single parents cope with their situations as well as the coping strategies used by different kinds of single-parent families. Single parents who are handicapped or who have handicapped children are a subgroup needing considerable further study (Schilling, Kirkham, Snow, and Schinke 1986). Adolescent single fathers, often not the custodial parent, would be a valuable research population as yet virtually untapped, who could lend insights to the complicated circumstances and needs of single parents. Desy (1986) suggested that another area to be explored is the impact of educational policy on the gender-stereotyped enrollment patterns in vocational education.

Not only is it important to consider gender stereotypes in career development enrollment patterns, but sex bias in all research efforts must also be examined. For example, teen pregnancy is frequently studied as though it were dependent upon the behavior of the female alone (Pecoraro, Robichaux, and Theriot 1987).

In considering support systems for single parents, Gladow and Ray (1986) called for research that will provide input on the issue of how different types of support affect various problems single parents face. They state, "Given forecasts that the single-parent family is here to stay, research focusing on strengthening single-parent families through support systems is a positive direction for the future" (p. 122).

In summary, multitrait, multimethod studies are needed, with special emphasis on longitudinal research that extends before, during, and after career development intervention programs for single parents. At all stages, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies should be employed. Studies that examine how family, personal life, work setting, and job performance and satisfaction interrelate seem especially important (Burden 1986).

CONCLUSIONS

Projections for the future indicate that the incidence of single-parent households will continue to rise (Hanson 1986). There is also reason to believe that the direct link that exists between single parenthood and poverty for many of the nation's women and their children will continue. This poverty cycle will exist as long as our social framework considers the single-parent family a deviant form outside the expected norm. Instead, we must recognize the realities of single parenthood and provide assistance so that this family type is viewed as a structure that contributes to the growth of our economic and social well-being. In addition, much can be learned about the coping strategies used successfully by single parents that may have relevance to other family structures.

As with any family type, single-parent families do not fit into a neat classification of specific traits and needs. There are, for example, three main and very different types of single-parent families. The incidence of adolescent pregnancy in the United States today and the myriad problems associated with teenage parenthood indicate that teen parents are one of the groups most in need of effective career development initiatives. Displaced homemakers are another subgroup who have reached adulthood without sufficient preparation to support themselves or their children. A third section of the stratum of single-parent families with unique needs is the families headed by single-parent fathers. Career development for this latter group should focus on the homemaker/parent role as well as assistance in building support systems.

Most single-parent family types in our society are characterized by the need to cope, often without sufficient resources of money, time, and support systems. Role identity and strain interact with and determine the effectiveness of chosen coping strategies. Healthy self-concepts, as well as a strong support network, are essential elements in the single parent's pursuit of success and survival.

Development of educational resources, including job skills, is usually the best way for single parents to be successful in meeting their needs as well as the needs of their children. In order for single parents to take advantage of career development programs and to join the work force, affordable, high quality day care is a requirement. At present, finding such day care services is impossible for most single parents. Government, labor union, and industry assistance will likely become necessary. Along with child care, appropriate career development assistance that is sensitive to the needs of single parents can provide a means for them to avoid the poverty cycle and contribute more fully to society.

Effective career development programs include a variety of components tailored to the needs of this specific audience. These components include emotional support through individual and group efforts, training in job-seeking skills, basic academic instruction, outreach and recruitment, child care, sex-role analysis, self-concept development (including skills assessment), instruction on combining work and family roles, emphasis on job skills nontraditional for females, and parenthood education.

There are a variety of models for incorporating these components into a successful career development program for single parents. Appropriate and effective settings for career development efforts are high school programs for adolescent parents, area vocational centers, and community colleges. Interagency network-based enterprises are also effective. Newsletters are one method of supplementing other systems of delivering career information.

Another area demanding the attention of those interested in the career development of single parents is the influence of state and national policies as well as the policies of business and industry. Governmental action in such areas as education for jobs, child care, and parental leave can make the single-parent life-style more stable and economically feasible in our society. Business and industry in partnership with government can also provide employee assistance programs including child and elder care, a variety of flexible work schedules, and ease in communication with home that enable single parents to participate fully and less stressfully in the labor force. No matter what the cost, providing services that enable those in single-parent families to earn a living is an absolute necessity.

A final area of concern regarding career development programs for single parents is the need for comprehensive evaluation of existing efforts as well as research to determine the direction of future efforts. Career education and development programs based on a research foundation are essential. This base will be most useful when a combination of methods is employed in both short-term and longitudinal studies. Focusing on the interrelationships between family and work is a high priority.

Miller (1987) suggested that new models of professional education may be needed in order to help professionals recognize the strengths and resources of single-parent families. Value clarification, as well as the study of various value systems, is also an important component in the training of career development professionals. This will enable those providing services to recognize and appreciate a variety of value systems and to operate accordingly.

Career development aspects of single-parent education that view single-parent families as a viable family form can assist these families in meeting their potential for healthy functioning (Loveland-Cherry 1986). Providing a way for single parents to earn an income adequate to support their families may be the most important contribution career educators can make, especially for low-income mothers. Counselors who focus on both the unique and universal aspects of this population will establish flexible individual, group, and family services for this special population (Gladding and Huber 1984). Not only will individual families benefit, but society as a whole will gain from the increased productivity and self-sufficiency of single parents.

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